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www.iowarail.com

Did you know...

A large semi-trailer hauls 26 tons

A rail car hauls 100 tons

A 100-car unit train hauls 10,000 tons

1 train car = 4 semi-trailers

A 100-car unit train = 400 trucks

A 100-car unit train is 1.22 miles long

400 semi-trailers are 5.29 miles long (bumper to bumper)

Additional Iowa transportation facts can be found at <http://www.dot.state.ia.us/>

Newsletter Feedback: e-mail [rail.newsletter @dot.iowa.gov](mailto:rail.newsletter@dot.iowa.gov)



Passenger Rail Corner

Potential changes for Amtrak President Bush triggers debate on the future of Amtrak by eliminating funding in his budget proposal

Ticket information can be found at www.amtrak.com or call 1-800-USA-RAIL

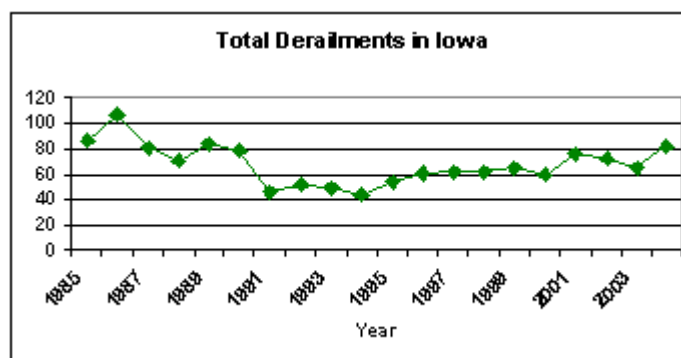
Feature Articles

Could it happen here?

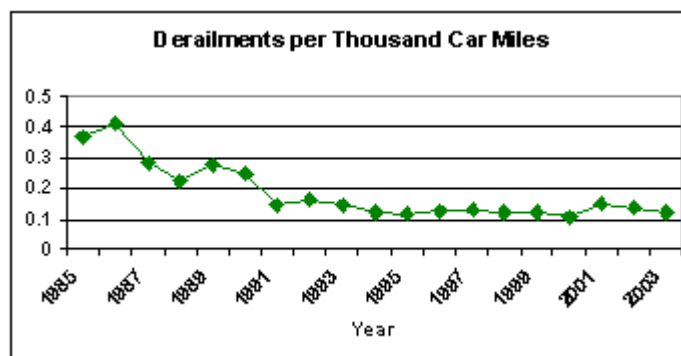
On Jan. 6, 2005, two trains collided in Graniteville, South Carolina. Several tank cars ruptured, including one filled with chlorine. The crash resulted in nine deaths and a community evacuation.

When I was interviewed by two local television stations following this tragedy the first question they asked was, "Could it happen here?" The answer is: it could happen anywhere there are trains carrying hazardous chemicals. While the tentative cause for the South Carolina incident has been identified as human error, everyone involved in rail transportation is working hard to prevent a similar incident from occurring in Iowa.

Train derailments are a common concern when it comes to transporting hazardous materials. The total number of derailments in Iowa fluctuates, but is currently down from 86 in 1985 to 82 in 2004.



But that doesn't tell the whole story. The rail business leaving or coming into Iowa has doubled since 1985, as has the number of rail cars that move through the state without stopping. The good news is that the number of derailments has not kept pace with the increased train traffic. When additional train traffic is factored in, the rate of derailments per million train miles in Iowa shows a distinct downward trend.



The railroads have invested hundreds of millions of dollars during this same period to upgrade and maintain their tracks, install new signal systems to regulate the train operation and protect the public at highway/railroad crossings, and train their employees in safe handling of the trains.

In addition to the railroad personnel that are constantly working to keep the system safe, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) employs inspectors in five disciplines to enforce federal safety standards: track; operating practice; motive power and equipment; signal and train control; and hazardous materials. Inspectors from each discipline inspect rail operations and rail infrastructure in Iowa. They write defects, issue violations and assess civil penalties when standards are not met.

Since the mid 1970s, the Iowa Department of Transportation has employed two full-time track inspectors to supplement the federal track inspectors. The DOT's track inspectors are certified and licensed through the FRA and travel throughout the state inspecting the railroad track conditions. Iowans are fortunate to have Lindon Bowen and Jeff Secora serving as track inspectors, both former railroad employees, they have extensive experience with tracks.

The railroads set the speed of their train operation, and it is the railroad's responsibility to ensure the track condition meets the federal safety standards for their chosen level of operation. Bowen and Secora ensure that the railroad inspectors are doing their job of maintaining the track to meet the federal safety standards. If deficiencies are found, the railroad can lower the train speed or repair the defect.

Avoiding all risk of a crash similar to the South Carolina incident may be impossible, but everyone associated with rail transportation in Iowa is working very hard to make sure "it doesn't happen here."

*Peggy Baer
Director, Office of Rail Transportation*

History in action

Board a train at Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad (BSV) for a ride back in history through the scenic Des Moines River valley. Take a leisurely ride or opt for a dinner or dessert train, if so inclined. Visit the large gift shop or museum. And kids or grandkids will thank you for a fun ride with Thomas the Tank Engine or with Santa on the Santa Express.



There is certainly a lot going on at the Boone & Scenic Valley Railroad these days. But it has been quite a journey. In 1983, the segment of track now operated by BSV was scheduled for abandonment by the Chicago North Western. Reluctant to see the line disappear, particularly in a town like Boone with a rich railroad history, residents raised \$50,000, mostly from donations of just a few dollars each. This allowed the purchase of 11 miles of line. A nonprofit historical society was established, and the very first train began operation later that same year. Over the years, engines and cars have been purchased and often refurbished, events have been added and the little railroad now attracts visitors from around the world.



Some riders are lured by train history; while others are drawn by the beauty of the river valley or the simple experience of riding a train. Passengers initially travel through some farmland, but are soon greeted by the spectacular view from the Bass Point Creek Bridge --- a full 156 ft. high and 784 feet long --- over the Des Moines River. The run down the valley, through the woods, and beside the river tops off a scenic and relaxing journey.

And if power is your thing, Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad has each of the three types of engines in operation --- steam, electric and diesel. In 1988, Boone and Scenic Valley Railroad purchased the very last steam engine manufactured. That doesn't sound like a big deal until you realize that the manufacturer was in China. More recently BSV added an electric interurban car, which travels from the depot to downtown Boone on summer weekends.

Annual ridership is more than 36,000, boosted by an additional 11,000 visitors when every train-lover's favorite cartoon character, Thomas the Tank Engine, comes to town. Kids get a 25-minute ride with Thomas the Tank Engine in front, along with a festival of other events, including special music, videos, story-reading (featuring Thomas, of course), a maze, and many other kid-friendly events. And for an enchanted winter journey, kids can take a magical ride with Santa to the North Pole.

Add the school trips and corporate and rail organization charters, and BSV is bustling. The trains are operated by fully-qualified engineers and employees, and a loyal group of dedicated volunteers. Volunteers from throughout Iowa, and even some surrounding states, come for the opportunity to work at this historic gem of a railroad. Fenner Stevenson, General Manager of BSV said, "The enthusiasm and loyalty of the volunteers is great, and makes this truly a community achievement. Volunteers come from all walks of life and all types of circumstances, but the affection for this railroad is an equalizer – it's amazing how the volunteers all blend and work together to make BSV a truly unique slice of Iowa history."

For further information on dates of operation, times and attractions, visit Boone and Scenic Valley's web site at www.scenic-valleyrr.com or call 800-626-0319.

Industry News

Helping Iowa grow

The Iowa Department of Transportation recently awarded low-cost loans or grants for four rail development projects.

- City of Goldfield - \$150,000 Rail Revolving Loan to help build 17,000 feet of new industrial spur track for Central Iowa Renewable Energy, LLC, an ethanol plant expected to produce more than 50 million gallons annually; 31 new jobs will be created by the ethanol plant
- Lincolnway Energy, LLC - \$500,000 Rail Revolving Loan to help build more than 8,900 feet of new industrial spur track; this ethanol plant is expected to produce more than 50 million gallons annually and will be coal-fired
- Iowa Northern Railroad - \$626,432 Rail Assistance Loan to help rehabilitate the rail line from Manly to Nora Springs
- City of Hills and Eldon C. Stutsman, Inc. - \$760,948 Iowa Clean Air Attainment grant to rehabilitate six miles of track on the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway Company's Hills line

Give them a hand

It's been a good stretch for the Cedar Rapids and Iowa City Railway Co. (CRANDIC). In 2004, CRANDIC celebrated its 100th anniversary in operation with many special events. But the celebration isn't over. *Railway Age* magazine has named CRANDIC its "Short Line Railroad of the Year." Featured in the March 2005 issue, CRANDIC is honored for its achievements in productivity, safety and customer service. Selected from a pool of strong finalists, the award was presented at the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association's annual meeting in Anaheim, Calif.

CRANDIC opened for business in 1904 as a high-speed electric interurban between Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. Today, CRANDIC maintains more than 100 miles of track and handles nearly 90,000 revenue carloads. CRANDIC employs 90 employees who worked more than 150,000 hours with no lost-work incidents.

"Our employees are extremely proud of their railroad, commitment to safety and successful heritage," said CRANDIC President Paul Treangen.

CRANDIC, owned by Alliant Energy, serves Archer Daniels Midland, Alliant Energy, Weyerhaeuser, Cargill, and Penford Products, all industries for which rail service is vital. CRANDIC is positioned for continued success thanks to an aggressive infrastructure improvement program, a new interchange, new haulage agreements, and participation in industrial rail expansions.

Safety counts

Iowa Interstate Railroad has been honored by one of the premier safety recognition programs in the industry. The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) announced that Iowa Interstate Railroad is the recipient of the Copper Safety Award - 4th place.

The program, co-sponsored by the National Academy of Railroad Sciences and risk insurance firm MARSH USA, uses ASLRRA's Severity Index, which is based on the railroad's employee injuries and hours worked. Iowa Interstate won the award in the category for railroads with 250,001 or more hours.

Safety awards are nothing new for Iowa Interstate Railroad. Last year, they received a Gold Award in the same recognition program and were the recipient of the American Association of Railroad's Harriman Award, the highest national safety honor in the industry.

In an industry once considered among the most dangerous, but now among the safest in the transportation sector, safety really does count. Way to go!

Government News

Horns A'Blowing Update (Again!)

The final locomotive horn rule was published by the Federal Railroad Administration April 27, 2005. The effective date for implementation is June 24, 2005. The rule requires that locomotive horns be sounded as a warning to highway users at public highway/rail crossings. Until June 24, 2005, the sounding of locomotive horns at crossings will remain subject to applicable railroad regulations, and state and local laws.

The rule also provides an opportunity for localities nationwide to mitigate the effects of train horn noise by establishing "quiet zones." The rule also details actions communities with preexisting "whistle bans" can take to preserve the quiet to which they have become accustomed.

For additional information visit the Federal Railroad Administration's web site at www.fra.dot.gov

Sign watch

Union Pacific's Twin Cities Service Unit, which encompasses much of northern Iowa, has embarked on a campaign to remove any doubt about what motorists should do when encountering a highway/railroad crossing. Union Pacific is contacting county highway authorities proposing to purchase and install either "Stop" or "Yield" signs at all non-signalized Union Pacific highway/rail public crossings.

The decision on use of the signs rests with the highway authority, with guidance from the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The MUTCD, which standardizes sign use and placement, allows "Stop" and "Yield" signs to be used in conjunction with a crossbuck, when appropriate. The advance warning signs will continue to be the responsibility of the highway authority, although where specific site conditions exist (as dictated by the MUTCD), the addition of a "Stop Ahead" sign may be required.

Union Pacific will continue its safety initiative with the remaining counties and city/highway authorities, using a phased-in approach.

On the Web

iowarail.com News

Have a question about rail transportation in Iowa? Are you interested in one of several different maps of Iowa's rail system? The place to go for a wide variety of information on Iowa rail transportation is our easy-to-remember Web site – www.iowarail.com.

New and updated information includes:

- Updated rail map showing the ethanol plants operating or planned in Iowa
- *Iowa's Rail System* brochure detailing the long-range vision for Iowa's rail infrastructure

Passenger Rail Corner

Potential changes for Amtrak



President Bush's FY 2006 budget proposal eliminates the current funding amount for Amtrak. The Administration's goal is to fundamentally change the structure and financing of intercity passenger rail service.

Amtrak received \$1.217 billion in FY 2005, but no funding is proposed for FY 2006. The proposal could force Amtrak to cease operations and embark on bankruptcy proceedings. (The only exception is \$360 million to be made available to the Surface Transportation Board to maintain commuter rail service in the Northeast Corridor during any transition.) The proposal is an attention-getter, and is forcing a debate by Congress on passenger rail systems and service.

The Administration is proposing fundamental changes to Amtrak and passenger rail systems, and is expected to release its plan soon. The plan is believed to be similar to last year's "Passenger Rail Investment Act" (S. 1501) introduced by Senator John McCain. Essentially, the plan would split Amtrak into different units (one for operations and one for infrastructure), place more responsibility on the states and encourage more competition in the delivery of passenger rail services.

The House Appropriations Committee held a hearing April 27 at which representatives of the FRA and Amtrak appeared. More hearings and debate will occur over the next few months.

Many are interested in the outcome of this issue and their views can be accessed at the following sites:

www.s4prc.org
www.fra.dot.gov
www.narprail.org

Changes may be inevitable, but whatever the outcome, hopefully passenger rail systems and service will have a bright future.

To view prior issues of this newsletter visit www.iowarail.com/newsletter/archive.asp